THE CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. *TOWN*,

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— — — — *Qui modo ſcurra,*
Aut ſi quid hâc re tritiùs videbatur,
Idem inficeto eſt inficetior rure. CATULL.

I HAVE lately received ſeveral letters from my couſin VILLAGE concerning the Entertainments of the Country. He tells me that they have concerts every evening in that part of the month in which the Almanack promiſes it will be moon-light: in one little town in particular, all the polite company of the place aſſemble every Sunday evening (after church) at the *Three Compaſſes*, which is kept by the Clerk, to regale themſelves with cakes and fine homebrewed in an arbour at the end of his cabbage-garden; to which they have given the genteel denomination of *Little Ranelagh*. I ſhall this day preſent my

reader with his laſt letter, and only take notice of the grand difference between the Summer Amuſements in Town and Country. In *London*, while we are almoſt ſmothered in ſmoke and duſt, Gardens are opened every evening to refreſh us with the pure air of the country; while thoſe, who have the fineſt walks and moſt beautiful proſpects eternally before them, ſhut themſelves up in Theatres and Ball-rooms, "lock fair daylight out, and make themſelves "an artificial *London*."

To Mr. TOWN.

—— *June* 28, 1754.

DEAR COUSIN!

WHEREVER the Town goes, thoſe who live by the Town naturally follow: the facetious and entertaining gentry, who during the winter amuſed the world within the bills of mortality, are now diſperſed into different parts of the country. We have had moſt of them here already. The *Coloſſus*, the *Dwarf*, the *Female Samſon*, made ſome ſtay with us. We went for a week together to ſee Mr. *Powell* eat red hot tobacco pipes, and ſwallow fire and brimſtone: the *Hermaphrodite* was obliged to leave the town on a ſcandalous report, that a lady uſed frequently to viſit him in private. Mr. *Church* for ſome time charmed us with concertos and ſonatas on the Jew's-Harp; and at our laſt ball we footed it to our uſual melody of the Tabor and Pipe, accompanied with the Cymbal and Wooden Spoons.

I WILL not tire you with a particular detail of all our Entertainments, but confine myſelf at preſent to thoſe of the Stage. About the middle of laſt month, there came among

among us one of thoſe gentlemen, who are famous for the cure of every diſtemper, and eſpecially thoſe pronounced incurable by the Faculty. The vulgar call him a *Mountebank*; — and when I conſidered his impaſſioned ſpeeches, and the extempore ſtage from which he uttered them, I was apt to compare them to *Theſpis* and his Cart. Again, when I beheld the Doctor dealing out his drugs, and at the ſame time ſaw his *Merry Andrew* play over his tricks it put me in mind of a Tragi-Comedy, where the pathetic and the ludicrous are ſo intimately connected, and the whole piece is ſo merry and ſo ſad, that the audience is at a loſs whether they ſhall laugh or cry.

After the Doctor had been here ſome time, there came down two or three emiſſaries from a Strolling Company, in order (according to the Player's phraſe) to *take the Town*; but the Mayor being a ſtrict Preſbyterian, abſolutely refuſed to licence their exhibitions. The Players you muſt know finding this a good town, had taken a leaſe laſt Summer of an old Synagogue deſerted by the *Jews*, and were therefore much alarmed at this diſappointment: but when they were in the utmoſt deſpair, the ladies of the place joined in a petition to Mrs. Mayoreſs, who prevailed on her huſband to wink at their performances. The Company immediately opened their Synagogue-Theatre with the *Merchant of Venice*; and finding the Doctor's *Zany* a droll fellow, they decoyed him into their ſervice; and he has ſince performed the part of the *Mock Doctor* with univerſal applauſe. Upon his revolt the Doctor himſelf found it abſolutely neceſſary to enter of the Company, and having a talent for Tragedy has performed with great ſucceſs the Apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet*.

THE Performers at our Ruſtic Theatre are far beyond thoſe paltry Strollers, who run about the country, and exhibit in a barn or a cowhouſe: for (as their bills declare) they are a Company of Comedians from the Theatres Royal; and I aſſure you, they are as much applauded by our country critics, as any of your capital actors. The ſhops of our tradeſmen have been almoſt deſerted, and a croud of weavers and hardware-men have elbowed each other two hours before the opening of the doors, when the bills have informed us in enormous red letters that the part of *George Barnwell* was to be performed by Mr. ——, at the particular deſire of ſeveral ladies of diſtinction. It is true indeed that our principal actors have moſt of them had their education in *Covent Garden* or *Drury Lane*; but they have been employed in the buſineſs of the Drama in a degree but juſt above a Scene-ſhifter. An heroine, to whom your managers in town (in envy to her riſing merit) ſcarce allotted the humble part of a Confidante, now blubbers out *Andromache* or *Belvidera:* the attendants on a monarch now ſtrut monarchs themſelves, mutes find their voices, and meſſage-bearers riſe into heroes. The humour of our beſt Commedian conſiſts in ſhrugs and grimaces; he jokes in a wry mouth, and repartees in a grin: in ſhort he practiſes on *Congreve* and *Vanbrugh* all thoſe diſtortions, which gained him ſo much applauſe from the galleries in the drubs which he was condemned to undergo in Pantomimes. I was vaſtly diverted at ſeeing a fellow in the character of Sir *Harry Wildair*, whoſe chief action was a continual preſſing together of the thumb and fore-finger, which, had he lifted them to his noſe, I ſhould have thought he deſigned as an imitation of taking ſnuff: but I could eaſily account for the cauſe of this ſingular geſture, when I diſcovered that

that Sir *Harry* was no leſs a perſon than the dextrous Mr. *Clippit* the Candle-ſnuffer.

You would laugh to ſee how ſtrangely the parts of a play are caſt. They played *Cato*; and their *Marcia* was ſuch an old woman, that when *Juba* came on with his—"Hail! charming maid!"—the fellow could not help laughing. Another night I was ſurprized to hear an eager lover talk of ruſhing into his miſtreſs's arms, rioting on the nectar of her lips, and deſiring (in the tragedy rapture) to hug her thus and thus for ever; though he always took care to ſtand at a moſt ceremonious diſtance. But I was afterwards very much diverted at the cauſe of this extraordinary reſpect, when I was told that the lady laboured under the misfortune of an ulcer in her leg, which occaſioned ſuch a diſagreable ſtench that the performers were obliged to keep her at arm's length. The entertainment was *Lethe:* and the part of the *Frenchman* was performed by a *South-Briton*, who, as he could not pronounce a word of the *French* language, ſupplied its place by gabbling in his native *Welch*.

The Decorations, or (in the Theatrical dialect) the *Property* of our Company is as extraordinary as the Performers. *Othello* raves about a checked handkerchief, the Ghoſt in *Hamlet* ſtalks in a poſtilion's leather jacket for a coat of mail, and *Cupid* enters with a fiddle-caſe ſlung over his ſhoulders for a quiver. The apothecary of the town is free of the houſe for lending them a peſtle and mortar to ſerve as the bell in *Venice Preſerved*; and a barber-ſurgeon has the ſame privilege for furniſhing them baſons of blood to beſmear the daggers in *Macbeth*. *Macbeth* himſelf carries a rolling-pin in his hand for a truncheon, and as the

breaking of glaſſes would be very expenſive, he daſhes down a pewter pint pot at the ſight of *Banquo*'s ghoſt.

A FRAY happened here the other night, which was no ſmall diverſion to the company. It ſeems there had been a great conteſt between two of theſe mimic heroes, which was the fitteſt to play *Richard the Third*. One of them was reckoned to have the better perſon, as he was very round ſhoulder'd, and one of his legs was ſhorter than the other; but his antagoniſt carried the part, becauſe he ſtarted beſt in the Tent-Scene. However, when the curtain drew up, they both ruſhed in upon the ſcene at once, and bawling out together "Now are our brows bound with victo-"rious wreaths," they both went through the whole ſpeech without ſtopping.

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I am, Dear Couſin, Yours, &c.

Printed for R. BALDWIN, at the *Roſe* in *Pater-noſter Row*; where Letters to the CONNOISSEUR are received.